

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. A method for processing an available inventory item query corresponding to inventory defined by stock-keeping unit (SKU) information, the SKU information including at least one SKU record defining a first level of detail for the inventory item, and a SKU inventory record corresponding to the SKU record and defining a second level of detail for the inventory items, the method comprising:

obtaining an available inventory query, the query including a set of criteria;  
determining at least one inventory item matching the query criteria, the inventory item corresponding to at least one SKU and SKU inventory record; and  
transmitting data associated with the matching SKU and SKU inventory records.

2. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein determining at least one inventory item includes identifying all inventory items matching the query criteria, wherein each identified inventory item corresponds to a SKU and SKU inventory record.

3. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein determining at least one inventory item includes applying a supplier limitation of use to select a corresponding SKU and SKU inventory record.

4. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein determining at least one inventory item includes applying a consumer selection limitation of use to select a corresponding SKU and SKU inventory record.

5. The method as recited in Claim 1 further comprising processing the data associated with the identified SKU and SKU inventory records prior to transmitting the data.

6. The method as recited in Claim 5, wherein processing the data includes generating a price corresponding to the set of query criteria.

7. The method as recited in Claim 6, wherein generating a price includes generating an ordered list of prices for one or more inventory items.

8. The method as recited in Claim 6, wherein generating a price includes applying any date based price adjustments based on a current date or date of use.

9. The method as recited in Claim 8, wherein the date based price adjustment is a tax rate computed by a date of use.

10. The method as recited in Claim 8, wherein the date based price adjustment is a service charge computed by a date of use.

11. The method as recited in Claim 8, wherein the date based price adjustment is an extra person charge computed by a date of use.

12. The method as recited in Claim 8, wherein the date based price adjustment is a point of sale variance computed by a date of use.

13. The method as recited in Claim 5, wherein processing data includes determining an inventory availability corresponding to the set of query criteria.

14. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the inventory includes travel-based goods and services and wherein the available inventory query includes an available travel-based goods and services query.

15. The method as recited in Claim 14, wherein the query criteria include a date or date range.

16. The method as recited in Claim 15, wherein the date or date range is selected by a graphical user interface.

17. The method as recited in Claim 14, wherein the query criteria include a selection of a destination.

18. The method as recited in Claim 14, wherein the query criteria include a selection of a hotel or hotel room-type.

19. The method as recited in Claim 14, wherein the query criteria include the selection of an airline or airline flight.

20. The method as recited in Claim 14, wherein the query criteria include a selection of a cruise or cabin type.

21. The method as recited in Claim 14, wherein the query criteria include a selection of a car rental vendor or car type.

22. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the available inventory query is a user-specified, available inventory query.

23. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the SKU information includes a SKU group record defining a third level of detail, and wherein the SKU and SKU inventory records correspond to the SKU group record.

24. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions operable for performing the method recited in any one of Claims 1-23.

25. A computer system having a processor, a memory, and an operating environment, the computer system operable for performing the method recited in any one of Claims 1-23.

26. A method for processing an inventory action request corresponding to one or more inventory items defined by stock-keeping unit (SKU) information, the SKU information including at least one SKU record defining a primary level of detail

for the inventory item, and a SKU inventory record corresponding to the SKU record and defining a second level of detail for the inventory items, the method comprising:

obtaining an inventory action request, the inventory action request including an identification of at least one specific SKU and SKU inventory record;  
processing the inventory action request; and  
transmitting the results of the processing of the inventory action request.

27. The method as recited in Claim 26, wherein obtaining the inventory action request includes obtaining a supplier request for inventory action.

28. The method as recited in Claim 26, wherein obtaining an inventory action request includes:

issuing an inventory action request to a supplier; and  
obtaining a supplier confirmation inventory action request.

29. The method as recited in Claim 26, wherein the inventory action request includes a supplier batch inventory action request, the batch inventory action request including an identification of one or more SKU inventory records and inventory modification data, and wherein processing the inventory action request includes:

identifying at least one SKU inventory record corresponding to the batch inventory action request; and

updating the identified at least one SKU inventory record with the inventory modification data from the batch inventory action request.

30. The method as recited in Claim 29, wherein the modification data includes a cost code indicative of a supplier cost.

31. The method as recited in Claim 29, wherein the modification data includes data indicating a maximum price that may be charged for the inventory item.

32. The method as recited in Claim 29 further comprising transmitting a confirmation of the updating of the at least one SKU inventory record.

33. The method as recited in Claim 29 further comprising generating one or more SKU inventory records corresponding to the identification data included in the batch inventory action request if no SKU inventory records corresponding to the batch inventory action request can be identified.

34. The method as recited in Claim 29 further comprising generating one or more SKU records corresponding to the identification data included in the batch inventory action request if no SKU records corresponding to the batch inventory action request can be identified.

35. The method as recited in Claim 26, wherein the inventory action request includes a supplier inventory query action request, the supplier inventory query including one or more query criteria, and wherein processing the inventory action request includes:

determining at least one SKU and SKU inventory record matching the query criteria; and

transmitting data associated with the matching SKU and SKU inventory records to an associated supplier.

36. The method as recited in Claim 29 further comprising filtering the data associated with the matching SKU and SKU inventory records prior to transmitting the data.

37. The method as recited in Claim 36, wherein the filtered data associated with the matching SKU, and SKU inventory records includes utilization data corresponding to inventory items represented by the matching records.

38. The method as recited in Claim 36, wherein the filtered data associated with the matching SKU, and SKU inventory records includes a supplier cost associated with inventory items represented by the matching records.

39. The method as recited in Claim 26, wherein the inventory includes travel-based goods and services, and wherein the inventory action request is a travel-based goods and services inventory action request.

40. The method as recited in Claim 26, wherein the SKU information includes a SKU group record defining a third level of detail, and wherein the SKU and SKU inventory records correspond to the SKU group record.

41. The method as recited in Claim 40 further comprising generating one or more SKU group records corresponding to the identification data included in the batch inventory action request if no SKU group records corresponding to the batch inventory action request can be identified.

42. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in any one of Claims 21-41.

43. A computer system having a processor memory in an operating environment the computer system operable to perform the method recited in any one of Claims 21-41.

44. A computer-readable medium having computer-readable components for managing one or more inventory items comprising:

an SKU component operable to define a first level of characteristics for one or more inventory items; and

an SKU inventory component corresponding to the SKU component and operable to define a second level of characteristics for an inventory item.

45. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 44, wherein the first level of characteristics includes date based characteristics..

46. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 45, wherein the first level of characteristics defines extra person charges.

47. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 45, wherein the first level of characteristics defines service charges.

48. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 45, wherein the first level of characteristics defines a cancellation and change penalty..

49. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 44, wherein the second level of characteristics includes a specification of a base cost associated with the SKU inventory component.

50. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 49, wherein the base cost includes a stand alone cost.

51. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 49, wherein the base cost includes a package cost.

52. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 44, wherein the second level of characteristics includes a specification of a base price associated with the SKU inventory component.

53. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 52, wherein the base cost includes a stand alone price.

54. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 53, wherein the base cost includes a package price.

55. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 44, wherein the second level of characteristics include a specification of a date of existence associated with the SKU inventory component.

56. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 44, wherein the second level of characteristics include a specification of a limitation of use associated with the SKU inventory component.

57. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 56, wherein the limitation of use is a consumer limitation of use.

58. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 57, wherein the limitation of use includes a number of consecutive days an inventory item must be reserved.

59. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 57, wherein the limitation of use includes limitations on what dates an inventory item reservation may begin.

60. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 57, wherein the limitation of use includes limitations on what dates an inventory item reservation may end.

61. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 57, wherein the limitation of use includes a condition that must be satisfied prior to the availability of the inventory item.

62. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 56, wherein the limitation of use is a supplier limitation of use.

63. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 62, wherein the limitation of use is allotment selling order restriction.

64. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 44, wherein the one or more inventory items are travel-based goods and services inventory items.

65. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 44 further comprising an SKU group component corresponding to the SKU component and the SKU inventory component, the SKU group component defining a third level of characteristics for one or more inventory items.

66. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 65, wherein the third level of characteristics includes a point of sale adjustment.

67. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 65, wherein the third level of characteristics includes taxes or taxation rates.

68. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 67, wherein the taxes or taxation rates are date based characteristics.

69. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 65, wherein the SKU group component is representative of a hotel, wherein the SKU component is representative of a hotel room type and wherein the SKU inventory component is representative of the hotel room type on a specified date.

70. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 65, wherein the SKU group component is representative of a car rental vendor location, wherein the SKU component is representative of a car type, and wherein the SKU inventory component is representative of a car type on a specified date.

71. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 65, wherein the SKU group component is representative of a cruise ship, wherein the SKU component is representative of a cabin type, and wherein the SKU inventory component is representative of the cabin type of a specified embarkation rate.

72. A system for managing inventory utilizing stock-keeping unit (SKU) information, the SKU information including at least one SKU record defining a primary level of detail for the inventory item, and a SKU inventory record corresponding to the SKU record and defining a second level of detail for the inventory items, the system comprising:

at least one client computing device operable to issue an inventory query, the query including a set of criteria; and

a travel server operable to store one or more inventory items defined by SKU and SKU inventory records;

wherein the travel server is operable to identify one or more SKU and SKU inventory records matching the inventory query criteria submitted by the client computing device.

73. The system as recited in Claim 72 further comprising at least one inventory unit supplier operable to provide the one or more inventory items by communicating with the travel server.

74. The system as recited in Claim 73, wherein the inventory unit supplier provides a cost code associated with the base costs of the inventory item.

75. The system as recited in Claim 72, wherein the one or more inventory items include travel-based goods and services and wherein the inventory query includes a travel-based goods and services query.

76. The system as recited in Claim 75, wherein the query criteria include a date or date range.

77. The system as recited in Claim 76, wherein the date or date range is selected by a graphical user interface.

78. The system as recited in Claim 75, wherein the query criteria include the selection of a hotel or hotel room-type.

79. The system as recited in Claim 75, wherein the query criteria include the selection of an airline carrier or airline flight.

80. The system as recited in Claim 75, wherein the query criteria include the selection of a cruise or a cabin type.

81. The system as recited in Claim 72, further comprising an SKU group component corresponding to the SKU component and the SKU inventory component, the SKU group component defining a third level of characteristics for one or more inventory items.

82. A system for managing one or more inventory items utilizing stock-keeping unit (SKU) information, the SKU information including at least one SKU record defining a primary level of detail for the inventory item and a SKU inventory record corresponding to the SKU record and defining a second level of detail for the inventory items, the system comprising:

at least one inventory supplier operable to provide the one or more inventory items; and

a travel server operable to store the supplier inventory items as SKU and SKU inventory records;

wherein the travel server is operable to communicate with the inventory suppliers and process inventory action requests corresponding to the SKU and SKU inventory records.

83. The system as recited in Claim 82, wherein the one or more inventory items and travel-based goods and services and wherein the inventory action request includes a travel-based goods and services inventory action request.

84. The system as recited in Claim 83, wherein the inventory action request includes the transmission of a batch inventory unit request, and wherein the

travel server processes the batch inventory unit request according to the SKU and SKU inventory records.

85. The system as recited in Claim 83, wherein the inventory action request includes the transmission of an inventory status query and wherein the travel server processes the inventory status query according to the SKU and SKU inventory records.

86. The system as recited in Claim 85, wherein the travel server processes the inventory status query to include utilization information.

87. The system as recited in Claim 82, wherein the travel server is further operable to initiate an inventory action request and transmit the inventory action request to the inventory supplier.

88. The system as recited in Claim 82, wherein at least one inventory supplier is not continuously connected to the system and wherein the travel server transmits a confirmation for all inventory action requests.

89. The system as recited in Claim 82, wherein the SKU information includes a SKU group record defining a third level of detail, and wherein the SKU and SKU inventory records correspond to the SKU group record.